

Department of Religious Studies

McCausland College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Carolina

Professional-Track Faculty Promotion and Criteria and Procedures

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See final page for faculty revision and approvals history

CONTENTS

- 1: Preamble
- 2: Guidelines for Promotion of Professional-Track Faculty
 - 2.1: Workload
 - 2.2: Qualifications for Faculty Appointment
 - 2.3: Terminology for Evaluation of Candidates
 - 2.4: Terminology for Promotion to Teaching Professor
 - 2.5: Terminology for Promotion to Associate Teaching Professor
 - 2.6: Criteria for Promotion to Senior Instructor
 - 2.7: Criteria for Promotion to Principal Instructor
- 3: Procedures for Application and Evaluation of Candidates
 - 3.1: Professional-Track Faculty Committee
 - 3.2: Preparation and Submission of the File
 - 3.3: Evidence for Teaching
 - 3.4: Criteria for Assessments of Teaching
 - 3.5: Evidence for Mentorship (for promotion to teaching professor and to associate teaching professor)
 - 3.6: Criteria for Assessments of Mentorship (for promotion to teaching professor and to associate teaching professor)
 - 3.7: Evidence for Service
 - 3.8: Criteria for Assessments of Service
 - 3.9: Circulation of Files and Faculty Voting

Abbreviations:

FM = USC Faculty Manual (rev. June 19, 2024)

PTFC = USC Department of Religious Studies Committee on Professional-Track Faculty

1: PREAMBLE

The Department of Religious Studies at the University of South Carolina offers interdisciplinary approaches to the academic study of religious beliefs and practices, using a variety of theories and methods. The faculty of the Department recognize that the full understanding of a phenomenon as complex as religion requires a multiplicity of perspectives and strategies. We are therefore committed to forms of scholarly research and teaching ranging from creative engagement with a religious tradition or traditions to critical distance and analysis, and embracing the insights of disciplines as diverse as anthropology, art, film studies, geography, history, linguistics, literature, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and theology.

Teaching. The Department places a strong emphasis on teaching. While the principal forum for instruction is the classroom, we are aware that teaching may include other means of transmitting knowledge, such as textbook development, other scholarly research and publications that inform classroom teaching, participation in distributed learning efforts, media interviews, and use of electronic media for pedagogical communications (including, but not limited to, blogging, podcasting, social media posts, online workshops, and streaming of educational content).

Mentorship: Mentoring of students involves guiding their development as scholars outside of a traditional course setting (including, but not limited to, research projects and internships). It may also involve academic advising, career-path advice, directing independent studies, and leading courses on study abroad and other off-campus opportunities.

Research. The Department supports scholarly research in many forms, and we evaluate such scholarship according to its quality and impact, not according to quantitative measures of productivity alone. We understand that the results of this research may be communicated in several ways, including not only the text-based publication of invited and peer-reviewed articles, chapters, and books, but also by means of seminars, colloquia, and electronic publications and communications of scholarship (including, but not limited to, blogging, podcasting, social media posts, online workshops, and online streaming of lectures). Our faculty also recognize that the formulation and development of grant proposals can be an important component of a research program and that the drafting of such a proposal, the funding of a grant, and the research activity associated with it may count as evidence of research.

Service. The Department values a wide range of forms of service, whether to the Department, the College of Arts and Sciences, or the University, as well as to professional organizations, the broader public, and government. We recognize that it is sometimes difficult to draw sharp distinctions among research, teaching, mentorship and service categories. While our guidelines address these separately, and while the evaluation of candidates necessarily proceeds with these distinctions in mind, we recognize that some activities may contribute to more than one category.

The university's *Faculty Manual* serves as the ultimate authority governing professional evaluation and promotion. The criteria and procedures below express how university policy is understood and applied within the Department of Religious Studies. These departmental criteria and procedures are aimed at several audiences: candidates for promotion; voting members of the Department of Religious Studies; staff members at all levels assisting with the compilation and dissemination of files; and administrators and faculty outside the department who will be involved in the process.

2. GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTION OF PROFESSIONAL-TRACK FACULTY

2.1: Workload

The workload of every professional-track faculty member will be divided between teaching, mentorship (in some positions), research (in some positions), and service, according to the percentages of effort stated in that faculty member's contract. The categories of *teaching professor*, *teaching associate professor*, *teaching assistant professor*, *principal instructor*, *senior instructor*, and *instructor* are all intended to describe professional-track faculty members whose plurality of percentage effort is devoted to teaching (setting aside arrangements made for administrative roles). Unless otherwise specified in a contract, a *teaching professor*, *teaching associate professor*, *teaching assistant professor*, *principal instructor*, *senior instructor*, and *instructor* have a base 4-4 teaching load, which normally represents at least 80% effort. All instructors and teaching professors are normally expected to contribute 10% of their

effort to service. Teaching professors are normally expected to contribute 10% of their effort to student mentoring.

If a professional-track faculty member changes job category, changes percentages of effort devoted to teaching, mentorship, research, and service in a contract, or assumes administrative roles that reduce their teaching load, their evaluation for promotion shall be based on averaging the percentage of effort for teaching, mentorship, research, and service for all of the years within the period of evaluation.

2.2: Qualifications for Faculty Appointment

The Department of Religious Studies follows university policy in defining the following qualifications for faculty appointments in professional-track positions:

Teaching Professor

Teaching Professor. An individual appointed as a Teaching Professor must have a record of excellent instruction as defined by the Department of Religious Studies and at least nine years of effective, relevant experience. This rank is reserved for individuals with proven stature in instructional roles. A terminal degree is normally required in Religious Studies or a closely related discipline. A teaching professor is expected to engage in service (10% of effort) and mentorship (normally 10% of effort) in addition to teaching.

Teaching Associate Professor. An individual appointed as a Teaching Assistant Professor must have a record of excellent instruction as defined by the Department of Religious Studies, have at least five years of effective, relevant experience, and have strong potential for further development as an instructor. A terminal degree is normally required in Religious Studies or a closely related discipline. An associate teaching professor is expected to engage in service (10% of effort) and mentorship (normally 10% of effort) in addition to teaching.

Teaching Assistant Professor. An individual appointed as a Teaching Assistant Professor must have strong potential for development as an instructor. A terminal degree is normally required in Religious Studies or a closely related discipline. An assistant teaching professor is expected to engage in service (10% of effort) and mentorship (normally 10% of effort) in addition to teaching.

Instructor

Principal Instructor. Promotion to principal instructor requires the equivalent of nine years of full-time teaching experience and a record of excellent instruction as defined by the Department of Religious Studies. A master's degree (or the equivalent of 18 hours of graduate study) in Religious Studies or in a closely related discipline is normally required. A principal instructor is expected to engage in service (10% of effort) in addition to teaching.

Senior Instructor. An individual appointed or promoted to the rank of Senior Instructor must have the equivalent of five years of full-time teaching experience in higher education and evidence of excellent instruction as defined by the Department of Religious Studies. A master's degree (or the equivalent of 18 hours of graduate study) in Religious Studies or in a closely related discipline is normally required. A senior instructor is expected to engage in service (10% of effort) in addition to teaching.

Instructor. To be eligible for appointment at the rank of instructor, a faculty member normally is expected to possess a master's degree (or the equivalent of 18 hours of graduate study) in Religious

Studies or in a closely related discipline. An instructor is expected to engage in service (10% of effort) in addition to teaching.

2.3: Terminology for Evaluation of Candidates

In accordance with the *FM*, the Department of Religious Studies uses the following standards to evaluate the performance of candidates for promotion:

Outstanding: The candidate's performance is far above the minimally effective level.

Excellent: The candidate significantly exceeds the minimally effective level of performance.

Good: The candidate's performance is clearly above the minimally effective level.

Fair: The candidate meets the minimally effective level of performance.

Unacceptable: The candidate has accomplished less than the minimally effective level of performance.

2.4: Criteria for Promotion to Teaching Professor

Promotion to Teaching Professor requires, at a minimum, evidence of **excellent** teaching, **excellent** mentorship, an **excellent** record in research (if some percentage of effort is devoted to research), and an **excellent** record of service. Candidates must demonstrate the consistency and durability of performance across a period of **at least nine years**.

See below at 3.3-3.4 for the specific artifacts, quantities, and combinations of evidence that candidates must provide to document excellent teaching.

See below at 3.5-3.6 for the specific artifacts, quantities and combinations of evidence that candidates must provide to document excellent mentorship.

See below at 3.7-3.8 for the specific artifacts, quantities, and combinations of evidence that candidates may provide to show a good record in service.

2.5: Criteria for Promotion to Associate Teaching Professor

Promotion to Associate Teaching Professor requires, at a minimum, evidence of **excellent** teaching, **good** mentorship, a **good** record in research (if some percentage of effort is devoted to research), and a **good** record of service. Candidates must demonstrate the consistency and durability of performance across a period of **at least five years**.

See below at 3.3-3.4 for the specific artifacts, quantities, and combinations of evidence that candidates must provide to document excellent teaching.

See below at 3.5-3.6 for the specific artifacts, quantities and combinations of evidence that candidates must provide to document excellent mentorship.

See below at 3.7-3.8 for the specific artifacts, quantities, and combinations of evidence that candidates may provide to show a good record in service.

2.6: Criteria for Promotion to Senior Instructor

Promotion to Senior Instructor requires, at a minimum, evidence of **excellent** teaching, a **good** record in research (if some percentage of effort is devoted to research), and a **good** record of service. Candidates initially appointed at the rank of Instructor must demonstrate the consistency and durability of performance across a period of **at least five years**.

See below at 3.3-3.4 for the specific artifacts, quantities, and combinations of evidence that candidates must provide to document excellent teaching.

See below at 3.7-3.8 for the specific artifacts, quantities, and combinations of evidence that candidates may provide to show a good record in service.

2.7: Criteria for Promotion to Principal Instructor

Promotion to Principal Instructor requires, at a minimum, evidence of **excellent** teaching, a **good** record in research (if some percentage of effort is devoted to research), and a **good** record of service. Candidates must demonstrate the consistency and durability of performance across a period **of at least nine years**.

See below at 3.3-3.4 for the specific artifacts, quantities, and combinations of evidence that candidates must provide to document excellent teaching.

See below at 3.7-3.8 for the specific artifacts, quantities, and combinations of evidence that candidates may provide to show a good record in service.

3: PROCEDURES FOR APPLICATION AND EVALUATION OF CANDIDATES

3.1: Professional -Track Faculty Committee

The PTFC includes all professional track faculty in the department at a higher rank than the candidate as well as the elected members of the Department of Religious Studies Tenure and Promotion Committee (TPC) at a higher rank than the candidate. The person elected annual chair of TPC will also serve as chair of PTFC, and the PTFC will report that chair's name to the Offices of the Provost and the University Committee on Professional-Track Faculty per the University Calendar.

3.2: Preparation and Submission of the File

Professional-track faculty members intending to apply for promotion must inform the department chair no later than October 15 during the academic year's promotion cycle.

The candidate will submit a personal statement explaining in detail how the candidate has met the criteria required for promotion to the desired rank. This statement will report the percentages of effort for teaching, research and service featured in every contract covered by the period of evaluation and report the average percentages that are to be used as a basis for evaluating the candidate's record.

The PTFC will prepare a comprehensive report on the candidate's teaching (for all candidates from whom teaching is contractually expected), based on all qualitative and quantitative artifacts defined as relevant in 3.3 below. The chair of the PTFC will assign at least two members of the PTFC to prepare

this report on the candidate's teaching. The PTFC's report on the candidate's teaching will consider the context supplied by the candidate's statement and by other submitted evidence. The PTFC report will present a specific recommendation on whether, in the light of all available evidence, the candidate has met the departmental standard for promotion in the category of teaching.

3.3: Evidence for Teaching

3.3.1: A summary of student evaluations prepared by the PTFC is required for all candidates. The PTFC chair will assign the preparation of this summary to the same PTFC members (at least two) who prepared the comprehensive report on the candidate's teaching. This summary must provide an average quantitative rating of overall performance for each of the courses that a candidate has taught during the period under review and a comparison of this average rating to the evaluations of Department faculty who teach other sections of the course, or appropriately similar courses at the same level.

3.3.2: Peer evaluations of classroom visits, collected by the PTFC and required for all candidates.

3.3.3: Copies of all student evaluations (required for all candidates).

3.3.4: A list of all courses taught at the University of South Carolina during the period under review, with enrollment figures (required for all candidates).

3.3.5: Representative syllabi as well as examinations and/or assignments for courses taught at the University of South Carolina (required for all candidates).

3.3.6: Copies of teaching-related grant proposals and other fund-raising initiatives designed to support education, whether at the University or elsewhere. Candidates should indicate the current status of the proposal and describe their role both in writing the proposal and in carrying out the project. A statement about the educational benefits of the project may also be appropriate.

3.3.7: Evidence regarding the development of resources or materials for teaching.

3.3.8: Description of the candidate's participation in teaching workshops such as those sponsored by the Center for Teaching Excellence at the University of South Carolina.

3.3.9: Documented recognition from students, colleagues, community partners, and others for skill and dedication in teaching.

3.3.10. List and, where appropriate, description of all honors and awards for teaching.

3.3.11 Peer-reviewed scholarly publications that support up-to-date teaching

3.3.12 Non-peer reviewed publications that support up-to-date teaching

3.3.13 Records of public humanities projects that support up-to-date teaching

3.3.14 Digital, audio, and/or visual media products and preparatory work for such products, that support up-to-date teaching

3.3.15 Grant proposals for scholarly works that support up-to-date teaching. Candidates should indicate the current status of the proposal and describe their role both in writing the proposal and in carrying out the project.

3.3.16 Other relevant evidence

3.4: Criteria for Assessments of Teaching

The Department of Religious Studies recognizes a variety of forms of achievement in classroom teaching, which we define to include instruction in online courses and (where appropriate) roles outside the formal classroom. Outstanding teaching is defined as creative and intellectually stimulating course design presented in an engaging way. Excellent teaching is defined as intellectually stimulating course design presented in an engaging way. Good teaching is defined as boiler-plate course design presented in an engaging way. Fair teaching is defined as boiler-plate course design presented in an effective way. Unacceptable teaching is defined as boiler-plate course design presented in an ineffective way.

3.5: Evidence for Mentorship (for promotion to teaching professor and to associate teaching professor)

3.5.1: Names, titles of projects, and dates of completion for RELG senior thesis students working under the mentorship of the candidate.

3.5.2: Names, titles and dates of completion for Honors College thesis students working under the advisement of the candidate

3.5.3: Names, titles and dates of completion for Honors College thesis students for whom the candidate served as a second reader

3.5.4: Names, titles, and dates of submission for students working on projects submitted for Magellan Grants and for students awarded Magellan Grants, who complete work under the candidate's mentorship.

3.5.5: Names, titles and dates of completion for service-learning projects supervised by the candidate at the University of South Carolina

3.5.6: Planning and participation in educational projects beyond the courses taught by the candidate at the University of South Carolina.

3.5.7: Evidence of participation in academic advisement, professional advisement and mentorship, alumni networking for students, or other support work for students outside the classroom.

3.5.8: Other relevant evidence.

3.6: Criteria for Assessments of Mentorship (for promotion to teaching professor and to associate teaching professor)

The Department of Religious Studies recognizes that professional-track faculty members' opportunities to engage in mentoring develop in response to student requests and are not entirely within the control of the individual faculty member. Mentoring is only treated as a separate category for those in the teaching professor ranks. For these roles, outstanding mentoring is defined as an annual average during the period under review of more than one instance of the mentoring activities set forth at 3.5.1-3.5.5. Excellent mentoring is defined as an annual average during the period under review of one instance of those activities. Good mentoring is defined as a biennial average during the period under review of at least one instance of those activities. Fair mentoring is defined as a quadrennial average during the period under review of at least one instance of those activities. Unacceptable mentoring is defined as any lesser average.

3.7: Evidence for Service

- 3.7.1 Participation in meetings of the department (list of dates attended).
- 3.7.2 List of roles in the PTFC or other Religious Studies Department committees.
- 3.7.3 Evidence related to program-building: initiation, development, and implementation.
- 3.7.4: Evidence regarding the development of new courses and educational programs.
- 3.7.5 Participation in meetings of college or university faculty (list of dates attended).
- 3.7.6 List of roles in college or university faculty committees.
- 3.7.7 List of active roles in professional organizations
- 3.7.8 Copies of service-related grant proposals and other fund-raising initiatives designed to support service activities, to include designations of the current status of the proposal, as well as description of their role/s in writing the proposal and carrying out the project.
- 3.7.9 List and description of service activity related to academic specialty - in the local community, and in communities elsewhere around the state, nation or globe.
- 3.7.10 Other evidence of service activities involving public-facing outreach.
- 3.7.11 List and, where appropriate, description of all honors and awards (and nominations for awards) for service.
- 3.7.12 For those faculty in the instructor ranks, whose contracts do not require a percentage of effort for mentorship, any of the evidence for mentorship (listed above in 3.5.1-3.5.7) may be included as evidence for service.
- 3.7.13 Published reviews of books, exhibits, public humanities projects, or other cultural features
- 3.7.14 Acknowledgment of, and/or other evidence of, editorial roles with scholarly journals or presses
- 3.7.15 Acknowledgement of, and/or other evidence of, scholarly or service work performed in support of organizations relevant to the field
- 3.7.16 Other relevant evidence

3.8: Criteria for Assessments of Service

The Department of Religious Studies recognizes that professional track faculty usually have a lower percentage of effort devoted to service (10%) than tenure-track and tenured faculty (who typically are expected to devote 20% to service). The Department also recognizes that professional-track faculty usually have fewer opportunities to perform service roles (for the department, the college, and the university). Expectations for service for promotion to Associate Teaching Professor, Teaching Professor, Senior Instructor, and Principal Instructor will all be scaled as appropriate, considering both the percentage of effort and the availability of service roles.

The Department expects all professional-track faculty to attend department meetings regularly, join in the work of the PTFC when they are eligible, and participate in departmental votes whenever they are eligible. The Department is encouraged to be flexible in recognizing the wide range of roles that include service components, including (but not limited to) service for professional organizations, service for other educational institutions, service for interreligious outreach, and service for student organizations and student support.

Outstanding service (at 10% of effort) is defined as highly engaged involvement in PTFC or other departmental committees, a strong record of participation in department meetings, and multiple other service roles. Excellent service is defined as engaged involvement in PTFC or other departmental committees, a strong record of participation in department meetings, and one other service role. Good service is defined as some involvement in PTFC or other departmental committees and a strong record of participation in department meetings. Fair service is defined as little or no involvement in PTFC or other departmental committees and a solid record of attendance at department meetings. Unacceptable service is defined as little or no involvement in PTFC or other departmental committees and a sporadic record of attendance at department meetings.

3.9 Circulation of Files and Faculty Voting

3.9.1 The PTFC chair will schedule a Department discussion of the application to be held after completion of the PTFC report on the candidate's teaching record. The PTFC chair will make the full file available to the Department at least one week before the meeting. Only department faculty who are of higher rank than the candidate shall be eligible to participate in promotion decisions. Materials in candidates' files and discussions in the departmental and committee meetings are confidential and are not to be divulged to candidates. Any unit faculty member who will be making an administrative recommendation on the case (e.g., the department chair or a dean) shall not attend the unit meeting or participate in the discussion of the application file, unless explicitly invited to do so by the PTFC chair.

3.9.2 Secret ballots are distributed to all eligible voting members of the Department. However, any otherwise eligible faculty member who has a conflict of interest, or a family or other close personal relationship with the candidate that could affect his or her objectivity, cannot vote or otherwise participate in the process (*FM*, 31). Faculty members who have served as principal advisor for a candidate's dissertation cannot vote or participate in the process, but other faculty who have served on a candidate's comprehensive examination or dissertation committee may do so. Special provision for voting on promotions shall be made for qualified voting members of the faculty who are absent due to sabbatical, leave of absence, or other temporary absence. Voting is required for all eligible faculty. Votes must be "yes," "no," or "abstain." Ballots must include written justifications for the vote considering unit criteria. Ballots with their justifications are to be returned by the deadline set by the PTFC chair.

3.9.3 The PTFC chair, the department chair, and one other member of PTFC will tabulate the votes. Ballots, and a written tabulation of the vote, will be delivered to the department chair. A candidate receives an affirmative recommendation with a 2/3 majority of the faculty voting in favor. Abstentions with proper justifications do not count in a determination of a majority. The general results of the unit vote, but not the vote totals, will be expeditiously announced to the candidate and to the department. In the event of a negative unit recommendation, the candidate must notify the PTFC chair, in writing, whether to move the file forward or to withdraw it. In the event of a promotion denial at the conclusion of the cycle, faculty may have recourse to the grievance policies and procedures detailed in the faculty manual. If the candidate chooses to move the file forward, the department chair will vote "yes," "no," or "abstain" and forward that vote with a written justification, along with all other recommendations, statements, and endorsements to the dean. If promotion is recommended by the dean, the file is then then

forwarded to the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Provost. The provost's approval is final. Upon written request of a candidate dissatisfied with any negative decision on promotion by the unit, the unit shall send that candidate's file through all appropriate channels for endorsement to the provost for appropriate action. After the decision by the provost, candidates dissatisfied with the decision regarding promotion may submit an appeal to the University Faculty Appellate Panel as specified in the Faculty Manual.

Faculty Revision and Approvals History

Unit Faculty Approval Date: January 2026

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Unit Faculty Adoption of Recommended Revision: September 21, 2026

College Approved Recommended Revision and Office of the Provost Verification: October 8, 2026

For purposes of formal publication and implementation, the effective approval date of these criteria is August 18, 2026, the date of the initial UCPTF approval.